

Negotiation Strategy and Professionalism of Master of Ceremonies in the Wedding Industry in Indonesia.

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ABSTRACT

This research project aims to analyse the negotiation strategies employed by professional Master of Ceremonies (MCs) in the wedding industry in Indonesia. The study focuses on how MCs manage communication, build a professional image, and utilise social media and professional communities as part of their negotiation strategies. A qualitative approach was employed to collect data through in-depth interviews and participatory observation with three well-known MCs. The findings indicate that effective negotiation strategies in this context entail the utilization of framing techniques, flexible strategizing and the management of interpersonal relationships in a proficient manner. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that the professionalism of an MC is contingent upon not only their technical proficiency in event hosting, but also their capacity to cultivate and sustain a professional image through social media and active involvement in professional communities such as the Indonesian Wedding Host Association (HIPAPI). These MCs were able to enhance their negotiating position by showcasing an extensive portfolio of work on social media and developing a reputation through professional networks. This strategy not only augmented their credibility in the eyes of the client, but also facilitated the negotiation process by establishing robust initial trust. The findings substantiate that a combination of effective communication strategies, utilization of social media, and engagement in professional communities are pivotal to achieving mutually beneficial agreements in the Indonesian wedding industry.

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1. Introduction

The wedding industry in Indonesia is one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy. With a rich culture and diverse traditions, a wedding in Indonesia is not just a ceremony, but a celebration that is imbued with cultural and social values. In recent years, weddings in Indonesia have evolved into more complex and lavish events, involving various professional vendors to ensure the smooth running of the event, including the crucial role of the Master of Ceremony (MC).

The role of the Master of Ceremony (MC) in a wedding is not merely to oversee the proceedings; they are also responsible for maintaining the atmosphere and dynamics of the event in a manner that aligns with the expectations of the bride and groom, as well as the invited guests. The success of a wedding often depends on the MC's ability to fulfil their functions effectively. This encompasses managing time, building communication with guests and coordinating with other vendors (Rahman, 2020). This demonstrates that MCs require not only good communication skills, but also effective negotiation skills to handle various situations that may arise during the event.

In this context, negotiation encompasses a range of elements, including the adaptation of event timing to align with client preferences, the management of disparate expectations among family members, and the navigation of unanticipated circumstances that may impede the event's progression. Consequently, the negotiation strategy employed by the MC is a pivotal determinant of the success or failure of a wedding (Putri & Santoso, 2021). In Indonesia, the role of the MC in weddings is becoming increasingly significant, given the diversity of cultures and customs that must be adhered to. The MC must be able to navigate these cultural differences in a tactful manner, ensuring that all parties feel respected and that the event runs according to the expected traditions. The ability to negotiate between the client's wishes and customary rules, as well as to maintain harmony among the various parties involved, makes the MC a central figure in the success of the wedding event (Yulianto, 2019).

In conjunction with the advancement of technology and social media, wedding industry MCs have come to recognize the significance of cultivating and sustaining a professional image through digital platforms. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn have become instrumental in enabling MCs to showcase their portfolio of work, client testimonials, and key moments from the weddings they host. By means of carefully selected content, these MCs are able to demonstrate their expertise, maintain their relevance within the industry and attract the attention of potential clients. By establishing strong and verified profiles on social media, the MCs were able to build initial trust with prospective clients even before direct negotiations took place. This strategy is in accordance with the principles of negotiation theory, which states that professional image and credibility play a key role in the negotiation process (Thompson, 2010).

Consequently, the professionalism of an MC is not solely determined by their capacity to oversee events and negotiate directly; it is also contingent upon their ability to leverage digital platforms and social networks to cultivate a reputation and extend their clientele. In light of the pivotal role that MCs play in the success of weddings and their utilisation of social media to bolster their negotiation strategies, this research aims to explore the strategies employed by professional MCs in Indonesia in greater depth. This research is not only pertinent for elucidating the dynamics of negotiation in the wedding industry, but also provides practical insights for MCs in enhancing their professionalism and competitiveness in an increasingly competitive market.

This research employs a systematic review of the literature on negotiation and the strategies employed in such processes. The term "negotiation" is used to describe a process in which two or more parties engage in discussions with the objective of reaching a mutually acceptable agreement. As defined by the Black Law Dictionary (2013), negotiation is a process of considering and submitting offers until an offer is accepted. Negotiation can be defined as a form of consideration in which discussions are held with the objective of reaching an agreement. Furthermore, it is a method for resolving and overcoming conditions in the process of bargaining, purchasing, or other business transactions. In business endeavours, negotiation communication is necessary because it helps to create the desired outcome and achieve profit. There are two ways to communicate during negotiations: directly and indirectly. Good negotiations are conducted orally and directly (face-to-face) as well as in writing (Tazkiya, 2021).

A negotiator is a communicator who initiates the communication process in negotiations within the context of the communication process (Parmitasari, 2021). It is therefore essential that the negotiator has a clear understanding of their client's position in order to facilitate an effective negotiation. The necessity of negotiation in human life stems from the fundamental nature of human existence, which is characterised by a tendency to defend one's interests. This is not to say that other humans do not have interests of their own; rather, it is a reflection of the fact that, in any given situation, there will be a number of competing interests. In this case, both parties have the same goal, namely the fulfilment of their interests and needs. Should there be a conflict of interest in a matter, a dispute arises. In the context of dispute resolution, a variety of approaches may be taken, including negotiation (Faiqotul, 2017). Negotiation may be defined as a social process that occurs when people or a party are unable to achieve their goals without cooperating with other parties (Thomson, 2010).

The attainment of the numerous objectives inherent to the process of negotiation is contingent upon the deployment of an efficacious strategy. In the context of negotiation, effective communication is of paramount importance. When formulating strategies, it is essential to ensure

that the messages conveyed are clear and unambiguous to prevent any potential misunderstandings.

The efficacy of negotiation is contingent upon both verbal and non-verbal communication. Negotiation is even described as a comprehensive communication process, whereby every action and inaction sends signals to other negotiators (Thompson, Ebner, & Giddings, 2017). The impact of body language and other forms of visual communication, such as appearance, clothing, posture, gait, symbols of the physical environment and the use of visual aids (charts, diagrams, etc.), can vary depending on cultural norms (Alexander, Howieson, & Fox, 2015).

A negotiation strategy is a plan or a set of actions that are prepared in advance of a negotiation with the intention of achieving mutually beneficial goals and agreements. It is essential for the negotiation process to be conducted successfully. A strategy may be defined as a pattern or plan that integrates an organisation's goals, policies and courses of action into a unified whole. Ireland (2008) defines strategy as an integrated and coordinated series of actions designed or planned in such a way as to gain a competitive advantage. Conversely, Coulter (2002) posits that strategy is a series of purposeful decisions in accordance with the expertise and resources of an organisation, including the opportunities and threats inherent in the situation. In light of the aforementioned opinions, it can be concluded that strategy is a meticulously devised resolution to achieve a desired outcome by taking into account the circumstances of the surrounding environment.

The planning process serves to clarify the direction and goals to be achieved. Barge (2009) identifies three principal categories of negotiation strategy: framing, strategising and relationship management. The following section will provide an explanation of the three dimensions in question. 1. The act of framing in negotiation strategy entails exploring a person's vision, perspective, or stance, or creating influence through the manner in which they comprehend the situation and establish a bargaining position. Barge (2009) outlines that the following factors can be used to influence an individual: the value placed on potential gains or losses, the perception of a message or idea as either competitive or cooperative, the identification of the underlying motives and reasons behind the message or idea, the response to the other party's move, whether distributive or integrative, and the acceptance of the offer. In this context, cognitive mechanisms are required to function as perceptual filters, influencing how individuals perceive the negotiation context and affecting activities such as seeking information and selecting strategies. 2. Strategising can be defined as the communicative performance strategies and tactics employed during the course of a negotiation. A strategy is a comprehensive plan comprising a series of moves, whereas tactics are the specific messages that execute the aforementioned moves. Barge (2009) highlighted that an integrative strategy may be employed at the outset of a negotiation, but that at various points throughout the process, distributive tactics may be utilised in order to achieve the desired integrative outcome. In general, three distinct strategy models have been proposed: the dominant, mixed, and episodic models. The dominant strategy model is predicated on the assumption that the negotiation process is stable over time and that negotiators consistently employ either distributive or integrative strategies throughout the course of the negotiation. In contrast, the mixed strategy model permits the flexibility for negotiators to alter their chosen approach during the course of the negotiation. The episodic negotiation model posits that negotiations unfold over time and that negotiators may alter their strategies in accordance with the stage of development of the negotiation or the specific characteristics of the episode. 3. Relationship management The term 'relationship management' refers to the ways in which negotiators manage relationships with their constituents. In negotiation theory, a distinction is made between agents, constituents and audiences. Negotiators typically act as agents, representing the positions and interests of specific constituencies. For instance, during labour-related negotiations, negotiators function as agents for their primary constituency, which is either the union or the company (Barge, 2009).

2. Method

This research employs a qualitative methodology to elucidate the negotiation strategies deployed by professional Master of Ceremonies (MCs) within the wedding industry in Indonesia. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for exploring the experiences, views and practices of MCs in complex and diverse negotiation contexts. This method enabled the researcher to gain rich and detailed insights into how negotiation strategies are executed in real situations. Data were collected through two main techniques, namely in-depth interviews and participatory observation.

These techniques were selected to provide a comprehensive picture of the negotiation practices conducted by the MCs.

In-depth interviews were conducted with the following individuals: In-depth interviews were conducted with three professional MCs who have significant experience in the wedding industry: Faizal Aprialdi, Fadli Rahman and Budi Prayitno. The interviews were semi-structured, with the researcher utilising an interview guide comprising open-ended questions. These were devised to examine the MCs' experiences in relation to the negotiation strategies they deploy, the challenges they encounter, and their approaches to navigating diverse negotiation scenarios. Interviews were conducted in person or via an online platform, contingent on the availability and convenience of the interviewees. Each interview was recorded with the interviewee's consent and subsequently transcribed for further analysis.

Participatory observation was also employed. Furthermore, the researcher conducted participatory observations at several weddings where the interviewed MCs were on duty. The objective of these observations was to gain insight into the practical application of negotiation strategies in real-world scenarios, as well as to understand the dynamics of interactions between MCs and clients, as well as between MCs and other vendors. To ensure the observations were conducted in an unobtrusive manner, the researcher adopted a non-intrusive approach, allowing the parties involved to interact naturally and without feeling unduly influenced by the researcher's presence. The observation notes included comprehensive descriptions of verbal and non-verbal interactions, as well as detailed accounts of key negotiation situations.

3. Results and Discussion

This research examines the negotiation strategies employed by MC professionals in the wedding industry in Indonesia, with a particular focus on their communication and negotiation strategies in the context of the various challenges encountered during wedding events. The literature review indicates that negotiation is an essential process that necessitates effective communication, both verbal and non-verbal, to achieve a mutually beneficial agreement (Thompson, 2010; Thompson, Ebner, & Giddings, 2017).

1. Framing Strategy in Negotiation

In an interview with Informan, an experienced wedding MC, it was revealed that framing in negotiation is of particular importance, particularly in the establishment of initial trust with clients. Budi elaborated that a profound comprehension of the vision and expectations of the wedding couple serves as the foundation for the formulation of an efficacious communication strategy. By contextualising the messages within a framework of profit and co-operation, Faizal was able to establish a constructive atmosphere from the outset of the negotiation, thereby fostering a sense of value and understanding among the client. This is consistent with the framing theory proposed by Barge (2009), which posits that the framing process helps to shape the client's perception and create a more advantageous bargaining position.

2. Strategising and Tactics in Negotiation

Fadli Rahman, a prominent wedding MC, underscores the significance of adaptable strategising. In his experience, Fadli and Budi employs a mixed strategy, initially adopting an integrative approach but subsequently utilising distributive tactics when appropriate, particularly when negotiating with clients who are highly assertive in their demands. This approach enabled Fadli to adapt his strategy in accordance with the evolving dynamics of the ongoing negotiations. This strategy aligns with the mixed strategy model described by Barge (2009), whereby negotiators may adapt their approach in accordance with the evolving dynamics of the negotiation.

3. Budi Prayitno, a well-known MC with a reputation for strong interpersonal skills, emphasised the importance of managing relationships with both clients and other vendors during the negotiation process. Budi underscored the significance of maintaining open and transparent communication with all parties involved in order to ensure harmonious relations during the event. He frequently assumes the role of mediator between the bridal party and vendors, ensuring that all needs are met without compromising the interests of either party. This approach is consistent with the concept of managing relationships in negotiations proposed by Barge (2009), which posits that

negotiators act as agents representing the interests of their constituents and must therefore manage those relationships carefully.

The findings of this study indicate that effective negotiation strategies in the wedding industry are not solely contingent on verbal communication skills; rather, they also necessitate the ability to manage interpersonal relationships and to adapt one's strategy in a flexible manner. Experienced MCs such as Faizal Aprialdi, Fadli Rahman and Budi Prayitno have demonstrated the successful application of negotiation theories in their practice, thereby illustrating that these strategies can be effectively employed within the Indonesian cultural and industry context.

The research also revealed that the professionalism of an MC is not solely determined by their ability to manage events and negotiate in person; it is also contingent upon their capacity to cultivate and sustain a professional image through social media and professional communities. As technology and social media continue to evolve, MCs in the wedding industry are increasingly recognizing the significance of strategically presenting themselves on digital platforms as an integral aspect of their negotiation and marketing strategies.

The Use of Social Media to Demonstrate Professionalism

Faizal Aprialdi, Fadli Rahman and Budi Prayitno employ social media, including Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, to exhibit their professional portfolios, client testimonials, and noteworthy events from their wedding hosting experiences. By means of carefully selected content, these MCs are able to demonstrate their expertise, maintain their relevance in the industry and attract the attention of potential clients. This demonstrates that social media serves as an important platform for the construction of a brand image and reputation, which in turn strengthens their negotiating position.

By establishing robust and authentic profiles on social media, these MCs were able to foster initial trust with prospective clients even before direct negotiations commenced. They leverage the power of visuals and storytelling to illustrate the caliber of their services, thereby creating a favorable perception that becomes a valuable asset in negotiations. This strategy aligns with the tenets of negotiation theory, which posits that professional image and credibility are pivotal elements in the negotiation process (Thompson, 2010).

The significance of professional networks and communities

In addition to social media, these MCs are also active in professional networks and communities, including the Indonesian Wedding Host Association (HIPAPI). Membership and active participation in these communities provides them with access to the latest information, potential cooperation opportunities, and support from fellow industry professionals. Through HIPAPI, MCs can exchange experiences, expand their network, and even obtain client recommendations from fellow community members.

Furthermore, membership of a professional community such as HIPAPI enhances the credibility of MCs in the eyes of clients, as association with a recognised community provides additional validation of their professionalism. In the context of negotiation, this confers upon MCs greater leverage and confidence when dealing with clients, as they are backed by a strong reputation and network.

These additional results demonstrate that professionalism in the contemporary wedding industry is not solely determined by technical proficiency in event management, but also by the manner in which an MC deploys social media and professional communities as an integral component of their negotiation strategy. This strategy is based on the premise that image and reputation are invaluable assets in negotiations, as evidenced by previous research which has highlighted the importance of credibility and trust in the negotiation process (Alexander, Howieson, & Fox, 2015; Thompson, 2010).

Faizal Aprialdi, Fadli Rahman and Budi Prayitno demonstrated that the effective utilisation of social media can serve to reinforce their bargaining position in negotiations. By exhibiting an extensive and impressive portfolio of work, accompanied by a multitude of positive testimonials, they were able to not only construct a professional image, but also to engender high-quality expectations in the minds of potential clients. This, in turn, served to reduce resistance in

negotiations, as clients were already imbued with confidence in the quality of the service they would receive.

Furthermore, active involvement in communities such as HIPAPI confers additional benefits for these MCs. It serves not only as a means of expanding their network, but also as a platform for strengthening their credibility in the eyes of clients. Clients tend to place greater trust in professionals who are active in recognised industry communities, as this provides assurance that the MC continues to adhere to high professional standards and is connected to the latest developments in the industry.

It can thus be seen that the integration of social media use and participation in professional communities represents an important element in the negotiation strategies adopted by professional MCs in the wedding industry. This approach serves to strengthen their position in negotiations, while also ensuring their continued relevance and competitiveness in this increasingly digital and connected market.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study are consistent with those of previous research, which indicate that effective negotiation strategies are contingent upon the negotiator's capacity to comprehend the social and cultural context and to manage interpersonal relationships in an optimal manner. As Barge (2009) asserts, framing represents a pivotal initial phase in the negotiation process, as it has the potential to influence the client's perspective on the situation and establish a robust foundation for reaching an agreement. In his role as a wedding MC, Faizal Aprialdi has demonstrated the importance of framing by exploring the client's vision and expectations. This allows him to build a strong rapport and trust from the outset of the negotiation process. This reinforces the view that framing is key in starting negotiations in a positive direction, as also expressed in previous research by Tazkiya (2021).

Furthermore, the flexibility demonstrated by Fadli Rahman in his strategic approach supports the notion that negotiation strategies should be dynamic and adaptive. Furthermore, research by Thompson (2010) emphasises the significance of being able to transition between integrative and distributive strategies in accordance with the circumstances at hand. In the context of MC marriage negotiations, the blended strategy employed by Fadli Rahman indicates that negotiators must be prepared to adapt their approach throughout the negotiation process in order to achieve optimal outcomes. This is in line with the blended strategy model outlined by Barge (2009). Furthermore, Parmitasari's (2021) research supports this approach, stating that negotiators must understand their clients deeply to ensure the effectiveness of communication and negotiation outcomes.

Moreover, Budi Priyatno underscores the significance of interpersonal relationship management, which is also corroborated by the findings of Alexander, Howieson, & Fox (2015). These researchers highlight that negotiations are not solely contingent on verbal communication but also on the capacity to interpret and navigate non-verbal cues, such as body language. Budi was able to manage the relationship between the various parties in the marriage by maintaining open and transparent communication, which was crucial to prevent conflict and ensure that all parties were satisfied with the outcome. This illustrates that relationship management is an essential aspect of the negotiation process, particularly in the context of a complex event such as a wedding.

In conclusion, this study not only corroborates the findings of previous research but also contributes to our understanding of how negotiation strategies can be effectively deployed in specific cultural and industry contexts, such as the wedding industry in Indonesia. The findings also underscore the significance of a combination of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies, as well as effective relationship management, in reaching an agreement that is satisfactory to all parties involved.

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